

August 14, 2019

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

We're reaching out to reiterate major concerns about the Department of Education's response to the lead contamination in public schools. Lead-based paint was banned in New York City in 1960 so it is unfathomable that children are still being exposed to lead in 2019. This issue is acute and it deserves immediate attention. We strongly urge DOE to commit to testing for lead in all areas, including non-instructional spaces in schools. DOE should also agree to remediate all areas that contain lead, including common spaces such as cafeterias and gymnasiums. In addition, there must be an official and proactive lead communication protocol with school building staff.

It's unacceptable that our city has failed, repeatedly, to keep our families safe from lead: [More than a thousand children were subjected to lead-based paint in NYCHA buildings](#). It's disgraceful that those children who were exposed to lead in NYCHA could have been exposed to lead paint in our schools. Our city's schools and homes should be safe.

In 2018, the Education Committee raised serious questions and concerns about lead paint in schools, even before the recent reports were released. At the time, DOE assured the Education Committee that there were robust testing protocols in place. Yet, recent reports suggest these protocols were inadequate.

While we appreciate DOE's commitment to ending lead contamination in the classroom, we have major concerns about the scope of lead remediation work in elementary schools.

As you are aware, Mayor Bill de Blasio has proclaimed he plans to [eliminate childhood lead exposure in our city by 2029](#). However, DOE has stated it is not yet inspecting all areas in schools. On July 31, during a Council meeting with a high-level DOE official to discuss lead contamination, DOE informed us that [it is still not testing the ancillary spaces](#) where children spend much of their day. These highly utilized areas include stairwells, resource rooms for special education services, art rooms, libraries, bathrooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums, and auditoriums. How can our city eradicate lead in less than 10 years if DOE is not diligently examining all school spaces for lead contaminants?

We appreciate that DOE is well aware of the risks of lead, but the notification process must be accelerated. DOE posted the lead report on July 31st. However, it wasn't until August 5th that DOE sent an e-mail to elected officials with the report, and a message clearly articulating the devastating long-term health effects of lead: "Lead is a known neurotoxin, particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of children under 6 years old. Lead can harm a young child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn." It is crucial to act immediately and thoroughly.

In addition, we request that DOE be clear in its language when addressing lead contamination. The DOE's letter to [principals doesn't explicitly](#) state concerns with lead paint. Instead, it mentions "deteriorating paint" conditions.

We also have concerns about the lack of appropriate communication with school communities. Lead contamination is a very serious issue, and so there must be proactive communication with

school communities, particularly principals, custodial engineers, school cleaners, teachers, and parents.

DOE must offer a clear protocol to schools and be available for questions that may arise. While custodial engineers are supposed to do visual inspections for lead, we've heard anecdotal evidence that school cleaners are surveying areas and questioning principals on whether children under 6 years old use certain rooms—but school cleaners are not stating why they need access to the information. The protocol must be clear and distributed to all schools.

In addition, there absolutely must be timely and proactive outreach to parents, stakeholders, and communities, in addition to the transparency measures which DOE has begun implementing.

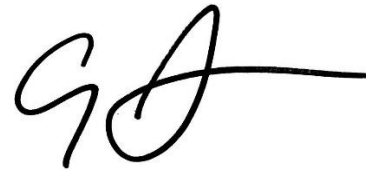
We understand there is a high cost with lead remediation, but there is a higher cost for the health and safety of our children if NYC fails to act.

Thank you for taking our requests into consideration.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Treyger", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Council Member Mark Treyger
Chairman of the Education Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey Johnson", with a large, stylized "C" and "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Speaker Corey Johnson